

Staff Consultation

35 Hour Working Week Results

The above consultation was open from Monday 24th January to Friday 11th February 2022. It was sent to 89 members of staff and 49 responded – a return of 55%.

Are you broadly in favour or opposed to the idea of the organisation considering a move toward a 35 hour standard working week from the current position of a 37.5 hour working week? Please note, if you are not in favour of this idea of a move toward a 35 hour working week, please continue through this survey and give your views on other questions asked. Your views will still be important for us to reflect on when we consider the detailed options which may progress the idea about changes in the length of the working week.

Of the 49 respondents, 44 (89.8%) were in favour of moving to a 35 hour working week and just 5 (10.2%) were not.

Those who were in favour of moving to a 35 hour week, the following initial themes/reasons were noted:

- Better work / life balance – help with childcare / caring responsibilities
- Improved health and wellbeing
- Increased morale and motivation
- Opportunity to improve organisational efficiency
- Proven to work in other countries
- Flexibility of work patterns
- Greater parity with other public sector organisations

However, these positive themes were also tempered by concerns regarding how workloads could be reduced, potential for negative PR, the possibility of staff working more hours to cover workloads (should they not be reduced), the need for technology upgrades to support any working efficiencies and concern regarding potential for changes to terms and conditions (e.g. leave etc).

Those who were not in favour cited initial reasons such as:

- The current economic climate following Covid and questioning the morality that SG suggest staff work less hours for the same money, and therefore the potential for negative PR.
- Concerns regarding not enough time currently to achieve workloads, let alone if hours were further reduced, particularly for existing part time staff.
- Not feeling that the benefits of a reduced working week are outweighed by the greater restrictions that would be put in place to facilitate the reduction.
- The proposal leading to more flexitime being accrued.
- In favour of the change for full time workers but not for existing part time workers, who already benefit from better work / life balance and require all current contracted hours to deliver workload.

However, these were balanced with some comments saying that on a personal level it would make a difference – e.g. working less time for the same salary whilst giving more time for personal reasons.

Staff were asked over what period of time they thought it may be reasonable to make adjustments in potentially moving to a 35 hour working week. The following options were provided in the survey and response rates indicated:

By April 2024	43
By April 2025	4
Later	0
Never / No Change	2

The following theme came through from the comments section:

Staff did not have the option to suggest implementation by April 2023. However, the “comments” section indicated an overwhelming and majority desire for implementation to be **sooner than the above options**. Reasons given for this were – staff morale, direction of travel currently indicated by Scottish Government, desire to not have a prolonged staff consultation period.

Would you be open to an absolute limit in flexitime that may be carried forward between 4 weekly flexi periods as part of options to support a reduction in the working week -i.e. there is absolutely no scope to carry forward more than the equivalent of 2 days in accumulated additional hours worked with any extra time being written off?

Yes	26
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Supporting comment themes included:

- The need to keep flexitime
- The 2 day limit currently being place
- Staff should manage workloads accordingly, should higher levels of flexi be accrued then workloads need to be looked at
- Supports work / life balance
- Happy with principle, specific amount needs further discussion
- The need to keep TOIL and consider overtime payments
- Some staff ‘banking’ flexi to take at a later date, affecting future workloads and team scheduling

No	23
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Supporting comment themes included:

- Staff working in roles with seasonal /statutory pinch points tend to accumulate flexi at busy times of the year. The need for these hours to be accrued and taken at quieter times of the year.

- Employees accumulating flexi by covering workloads for team members absences / vacancies
- The need to keep flexibility with flexi time – perhaps through individual discussions with line managers.
- The reduction in hours will lead to an increase in flexi being accrued due to staff trying to deliver workload (should these not reduce). Should additional flexi not be permitted this will mean staff working unpaid.
- An absolute limit would mean loss of flexibility for the organisation.

Should an element of reduction in working hours be made through an increase in the current allowance of 30 minutes each week in “active credit”? e.g. active credit becomes 1.5 hours, of the 37.5 hour working week?

Yes 24

Supporting comment themes included:

- Positive way to encourage promotion and increase of exercise
- Supports mental health
- Allows for increased levels of exercise and flexibility of when to use it

No 25

Supporting comment themes included:

- Active credit should be stopped completely if working hours are reduced
- Staff should be able to choose what to do with the additional hours
- Staff will not make use of additional Active credit and continue work at current levels
- Concern regarding public perception
- Staff not making use of existing Active credit

Would you be open to any reduction in annual leave as part of a move to a reduced working week?

Yes 8

Supporting comment themes included:

- Any reduction being proportionate to the hours no longer being worked

No 41

Supporting comment themes included:

- Leave is required to cover childcare in school holidays and other caring responsibilities – affects women more than men
- Required to give staff a sustained break from work
- The existing leave entitlement being a key benefit of working for CNPA
- A way of reducing pay/benefits which is not meant to be affected by reduction in hours.

- Any reduction in hours being proportionate to that of current leave
- Salaries no longer competitive – annual leave benefit helps address this

Should the organisation consider a movement toward a compressed working week, for example a 4 day week or 9 day fortnight, as part of our consideration of any change in staff contracts?

Yes 34

Supporting comment themes included:

- This should not be compulsory (as it would not suit all individuals)
- Staff can already request to work this type of pattern through existing flexible working arrangements
- This should be an option for staff to consider individually
- A number of staff indicating they would wish to work compressed hours at the present time
- Supports work / life balance

No 15

Supporting comment themes included:

- Work patterns should be flexible to suit all individual circumstances. A 4 day week / 9 day fortnight would not do this.
- Staff can already request to work this type of pattern through existing flexible working arrangements
- Negative impact on organisational reputation – would effectively be closed to public and partners on certain days

Should the organisation consider a blend of standard FTE contracts if this supports a business case for change in working hours: e.g. for illustration purposes only a 37.5 hour + 36.5 variable annual holiday maximum (a) (i.e. current position) and a 35 hour + 34 day variable annual holiday maximum (b) ? So what we mean is some people work to (a) and others to (b)

Yes 26

Supporting comment themes included:

- Allows individuals to decide which contract would suit their needs best
- Concern regarding complexity of administration

No 23

Supporting comment themes included:

- An overly complicated system, particularly for HR, payroll and pensions.
- Doesn't deliver a universal benefit to all staff
- It would be divisive between staff – everyone should be on the same standard hours / leave with pro rata worked out accordingly
- The need for clear organisational policy

- Would create inequalities across the organisation
- Potential for new starters to be disproportionately impacted

The Cairngorms NPA does not expect any additional funding to cover changes and resourcing arising from changes in working hours. A reduction to 35 hours is estimated to equate to over 6 full time equivalent staff on the basis of current staffing levels. How might the organisation act to create efficiencies and organise working to help offset this reduction in staff time available without increasing costs or avoid negative impacts on productivity? Are there any specific measures you can envisage to help manage this (and help build a business case for change)?

1. The need for baseline productivity to be established, any efficiencies must be capable of being measured.
2. Use of video conferencing and reduction in travel to continue as standard
3. Management of vacancies and workload assessment before recruitment takes place
4. Use of existing staff members' skill sets to work on particular tasks and potential for personal development
5. Clear team/job plans with focus on requirements to deliver NPPP objectives
6. Get better at saying 'no'
7. Look at where individuals and teams can make small efficiency savings
8. Improvement of IT, filing systems including use of cloud based systems (apps etc.)
9. Review sign off processes for increased delegation on decision making
10. Reducing frequency and length of meetings
11. Offer a voluntary exit scheme before implementation of 35 hour week
12. Ensuring the IT team are fully resourced
13. Encourage staff to work hybridly (office and home)
14. Minimise amount of essential administration e.g online learning
15. Consider offering different work patterns – may reduce sick absence, increase work efficiency/productivity and job satisfaction. Therefore reducing staff turnover and recruitment costs.
16. Supporting staff to cover geographic areas of the CNP close to their home location.
17. Staff currently working to capacity, difficult to see how productivity can be maintained without additional staffing/resources.
18. The need to compare current productivity to pre-Covid (against introduction of video conferencing / working from home / reduced travel)
19. Uncertainty if homeworking does increase productivity

Are there any specific considerations in developing a business case whereby changes to working arrangements including reduced hours may be considered to themselves enhance productivity? (For example, it has been suggested that home working arrangements have led to a reduction in levels of absence and therefore led to enhanced productivity which may at least partially offset a reduction in working hours.)

1. Staff being more refreshed – possible 1 hour lunch break
2. Reduction in staff absence
3. Staff becoming better at time management

4. A productivity baseline survey is required
5. Would help equality in the workplace – childcare, shorter working weeks etc.
6. Reduced organisational ecological / carbon footprint
7. Homeworking has led to a reduction in collaborative working and not necessarily an increase in productivity
8. Return to office working may result in loss of productivity as staff naturally revert to 'catching up' and water cooler conversation
9. Should meetings/training require attendance in person this will reduce productivity due to travel
10. Productivity increases when staff feel valued and appreciated
11. Better work / life balance – ability to schedule working hours around individual times of productivity e.g. first thing in morning / afternoon / evening
12. Positive impact on mental health and wellbeing
13. Look at studies from other countries already working shorter hours.
14. Concern regarding inefficiencies of staff working part time combined with high staff turnover and short term contracts

What, if any, specific considerations should be brought into thinking around provisions for fixed term staff?

1. No alternative considerations to be made, should be treated equally as other staff
2. Need to start conversation regarding renewing / extending contracts earlier to avoid staff leaving contract early.
3. Option for retainer / bonus if they stay for the full length of contract
4. Established projects to potentially be scaled back in order to be achievable within the already specified timeframe (possibility of negative public perception – not delivering what specified)
5. Length of contracts extended to achieve existing projects aims within established timeframes – cost implications for organisation.
6. Fixed term staff to choose if they move to a 35 hour contract.
7. Possibility for annualised hour contracts for seasonal / less than 12 month contracted staff – with maximum hours to be worked over 7 day period

What, if any, specific considerations should be brought into thinking to ensure any perceived equalities and inclusion considerations and improvements are considered?

1. Equality must be assured, with equality impact assessments carried out and Equality groups consulted (EAP / internal forum). Internal monitoring of equalities carried out to receive feedback
2. Continued flexibility for carers
3. Same terms and conditions for all staff (part time / pro rata)
4. Supports equality and may help with recruiting women – longer hours currently favour men due to childcare/caring responsibilities mostly being covered by women
5. Supports inclusion for staff who may be less able to work longer hours due to mental health and wellbeing issues
6. Any move towards new technology should be supported by training for all staff
7. Clear guidance and policies required to support staff with any changes

8. A consistent approach across all staff – it may be divisive to have some staff on 37.5 contracts and others on 35 hour contracts
9. Ongoing conversations to be had using plain English
10. The need to keep flexibility regarding individuals' choice to work patterns that suit their own needs (including not to introduce compressed hours for all staff)
11. The need to keep hybrid working to support flexibility

Do you have any other comment or feedback at this time on the possibility of a move toward a 35 hour working week as set out at the start of this survey? Are there any questions you feel should be addressed by management at this time on this subject?

1. What are other public sector organisations considering on this issue / already doing and how have they / are they going to present it to their various audiences?
2. Unequal outcomes being a considerable risk
3. Managers will need support in implementing this as they will be required to provide support to their teams and with managing workloads.
4. The benefits outweigh the disbenefits, should be seen as a opportunity for positive and constructive change
5. The organisational ethos of flexibility should remain
6. The need for clarity that this change will affect all staff – current uncertainty as to how this reduction will affect part time workers.
7. How will the Corporate Services team be supported with the additional workload of implementing this change?
8. Possibility of trialling the 4 day week?
9. Reduction in hours won't necessarily lead to loss of productivity. Happy staff are productive staff.
10. Negative impact on staff morale should the change not be taken forward.
11. Need for centralised view of workloads and vacancy management across the organisation.
12. Uncertainty if reduction in hours will mean reduction in pay
13. Timescales given for introduction of this are too slow
14. Time savings due to less travel to meetings etc. would not necessarily apply to Corporate Services staff – therefore other ways would have to be found to offset working time lost
15. The need to keep staff regularly informed throughout the process